



# **Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

## **Consumer Services Department**

**Fiscal Years:  
FY 2005-06  
&  
FY 2006-07**

**Plan Date: 12/9/2005**

**Approved by:**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. Grimes Peel".

**Cathy Grimes Peel, Department Director**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Ruiz, Jr.". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

**Joseph A. Ruiz, Jr., Assistant County Manager**

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- *ES1 Enable County departments and their service partners to deliver quality customer service*
- *ED2 Lead the coordination of economic development activities throughout Miami-Dade County*
- *ED3 Expand entrepreneurial development opportunities within Miami-Dade County*
- *ED4 Create a more business-friendly environment in Miami-Dade County*
- *HH3 Improve the future of Miami-Dade County's children and youth*
- *HH4 Promote independent living through early intervention and support services*
- *NU2 Empower the community by increasing communications and coordination with local, state, and federal entities*
- *NU3 Promote responsible stewardship of natural resources and unique community environments*
- *NU4 Use Consistent, fair and effective means to achieve code compliance*

## **Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

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- *NU5 Enact programs to beautify and improve urban and residential areas*

### **Outcomes**

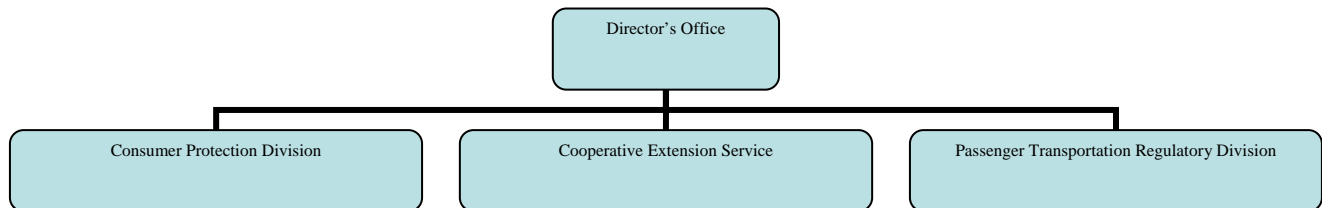
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Consumer Services Department (CSD) is the County's consumer protection arm. CSD licenses and regulates specific industries, enforces consumer protection and trade practice standards of general applicability, conducts consumer, youth, family, and business education, and mediates consumer disputes against private businesses. In addition to the Director's Office, the CSD accomplishes these responsibilities through the Consumer Protection Division, Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division, and the Cooperative Extension Service Division.

### **TABLE OF ORGANIZATION**



### **SUMMARY OF MAJOR PROGRAMS, INITIATIVES OR MILESTONES TO BE ACHIEVED IN THE CURRENT AND NEXT FISCAL YEAR**

The following projects and initiatives are expected to be accomplished in FY 2005/06 and FY 2006/07:

- Work with the cable television industry in effectuating system integration that will increase the viewing reliability of the County's cable access channels.
- Propose and submit revisions to various ordinances including those governing passenger motor carriers, chauffeurs, limousine and ambulance rates, motor vehicle repair, and consumer protection provisions.
- Conduct Code mandated taxicab and limousine lotteries.
- Complete Code required taxicab study and submit recommendations to the Board.
- Implement Board approved taxicab meter increase and evaluate taxicab technology improvements for the benefit of passengers.
- Promote efficiencies to for-hire drivers that opt to renew their registrations by mail vs. in-person.
- Participate in the 2007 Super Bowl planning process to coordinate for-hire transportation services including instituting a mechanism for the issuance of temporary operating permits for limousines.
- Upgrade the availability of the agricultural weather monitoring system by allowing Internet access by agricultural producers during cold weather events.
- Enhance consumer outreach opportunities, including a new consumer newsletter and a new website, and launch of an educational program series targeted at senior citizens.

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- Expand the existing program that measures customer service satisfaction.
- Complete implementation of alcohol signage and shopping cart ordinances and re-implement weights and measures program.
- Seek funding from the Code Enforcement Trust Fund for departmental technology enhancements related to code enforcement activities and work with CAVU Corporation to replace obsolete databases with new technologies to improve efficiency and services to the public.
- Contract with the Enterprise Technology Services Department for website support and technology needs.
- Explore the Department's response to emergency operations by allowing Extension access to helicopter for post disaster agricultural assessments and enhanced coordination of price gouging and cable restoration activities.

### **SIGNIFICANT FACTORS CRITICAL TO THE DEPARTMENT'S SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BUSINESS PLAN.**

- Absence of adverse legislation that results in the preemption or reduction of any of CSD's regulatory programs or general consumer protection laws.
- Additional regulatory programs that are not self-supporting.
- Regulatory fee schedules that fully support regulatory activities.
- Maintaining financial support from DERM and the Solid Waste Department for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program (FYN) and environmental education.
- Continued financial support from the Seaport Department for starter service and for-hire enforcement activities at the Seaport
- Continued commitment from Miami Dade College to the Cable Television Access Project (Cable TAP)
- Fulfillment of the cable television industry's commitment to interconnect and distribute the County's cable access channels from the point of origination.
- Maintaining a dialogue with industry groups in reviewing policies, ordinances, fee schedules and initiatives.
- Maintaining general fund support of general consumer protection activities, consumer mediation, extension services, cable regulation, and administration.
- Successful outcome of the RFP to develop an enterprise database system and funds to support service level agreements with the Enterprise Technology Services Department for technology needs and improving CSD's web site.
- Availability of sufficient staff resources and staffing levels.
- Successful completion of the Code required taxicab use study.
- Ongoing support from the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences in support of Extension programs

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Department Purpose/Mission Statement**

Recognizing that residents and visitors are all consumers, the Consumer Services Department's mission is to protect, educate and represent consumers in a challenging and ever changing economy. We will accomplish this mission by:

Enforcing consumer laws and licensing requirements that protect the purchasers of goods and services;

Promoting a stable economic climate for the business community by ensuring compliance with laws;

Providing outreach and education to consumers and businesses;

Investigating and mediating consumer complaints;

Advocating on behalf of consumers and working with our business community, consumers and other agencies to develop and implement creative solutions to consumer problems.

## **DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION**

The Consumer Services Department (CSD) is the County's consumer protection arm. CSD licenses and regulates specific industries, enforces consumer protection and trade practice standards of general applicability, conducts consumer, youth, family, and business education, and mediates consumer disputes against private businesses.

### **Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division**

The Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division licenses and regulates taxicabs, limousines, passenger motor carriers (including jitneys and tour vans), special transportation service vehicles, non-emergency transportation services, for-hire chauffeurs, and ambulance services. For-hire vehicles, as well as private school buses, are inspected for safety and appearance at our vehicle inspection station. The Division maintains an extensive chauffeur training schedule for new and renewing for-hire chauffeurs.

### **Consumer Protection Division**

The Consumer Protection Division licenses and regulates motor vehicle repair shops and mechanics, locksmith businesses and locksmiths, local moving companies, towing businesses, vehicle immobilization (booting) companies and employees, title loan lenders, water remetering companies, telecommunications providers, and cable television companies. General consumer protection laws enforced include standards governing weights, measures, packaging and labeling; prohibitions against unfair and deceptive trade practices, price gouging in an emergency, self service tobacco sales, discrimination in tipping and gender pricing; and consumer protection laws relating to rental car agencies, dry cleaners, cash register price screen visibility, the availability of baby diaper changing stations at certain facilities, non-consent towing rates, alcohol warning signs, shopping cart warning notices, and check cashing establishments, among others. The Division houses the Consumer Complaint Mediation Center, and administers a contract with Miami-Dade College for production of the Cable TAP Community Channel.

### **Cooperative Extension Division**

The Cooperative Extension Service Division is a partnership between the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), the US Department of Agriculture, and the County. Extension Agents provide science-based educational programs in commercial agriculture and horticulture, home gardening and landscape maintenance, marine sciences, food safety and nutrition, family and consumer sciences, and operate the 4-H youth development program.

### **Office of the Director**

The Office of the Director provides policy direction, oversight, and centralized services such as personnel and information technology support. The office also houses shared positions that provide services throughout the department including collections, public information and legal support. The Consumer Advocate, a Code mandated position, provides consumer advocacy, education and outreach, and intervenes in legal and administrative

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proceedings on behalf of consumers in the public interest. An example of the educational programs conducted are small claims court clinics offered monthly throughout the County to teach consumers how to utilize the small claims court system.

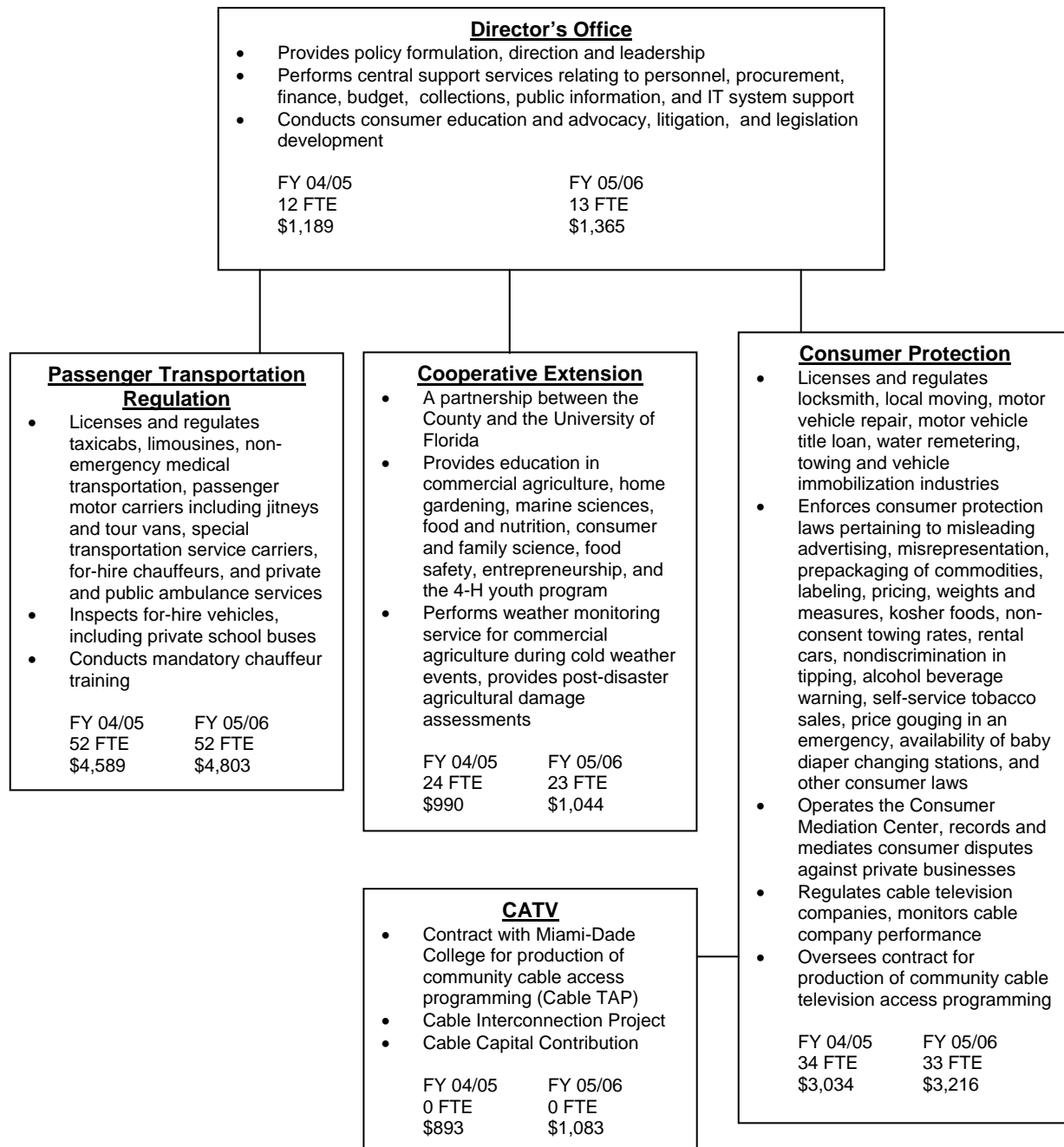
## Departmental Business Plan and Outlook

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### ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING LEVELS

(Dollars in thousands)



**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook****Department Name: Enterprise Technology Services Department****Fiscal Years: 2005/2006 – 2006/2007****STAFFING AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES**

In FY 05/06 a vacant Administrative Officer II position was shifted from the Consumer Protection Division to the Director's Office. The position was reclassified to an Administrative Officer I and will assist the Department's Administrative Services Manager with department-wide procurement and accounts payable.

The Cooperative Extension Division deleted a vacant Extension agent position from the Division's table of organization in FY 05/06. This position had remained frozen due to lack of funding from the University of Florida.

A position overage was approved in FY 05/06 for a Consumer Services Licensing Clerk in the Consumer Protection Division to reduce business licensing processing and eliminate overtime in the licensing section.

**STAFFING LEVELS**

| Functional Unit                  | FY 04/05 Budget<br>(Prior Year) | FY 05/06 Budget<br>(Current Year) |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Director's Office/Administration | 12                              | 13                                |
| Consumer Protection Division     | 34                              | 33                                |
| Passenger Transportation         | 52                              | 52                                |
| Cooperative Extension Division   | 24                              | 23                                |
| Total                            | 122                             | 121                               |

## FISCAL ENVIRONMENT

### Revenues and Expenditures by Fund

(All Dollars in Thousands)

|                                | Total Annual Budget            |                                  |                                   |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                                | Prior Fiscal Year 04/05 Actual | Current Fiscal Year 05/06 Budget | Projection as of December 1, 2005 |
| <b>Revenues</b>                |                                |                                  |                                   |
| Gen Fund & Occup. License Fees | 1,975                          | 2,627                            | 2,627                             |
| Fines, AVC's                   | 5,724                          | 5640                             | 5640                              |
| Cable TV Capital Contribution  | 1,118                          | 985                              | 985                               |
| Tr fr Other depts              | 397                            | 408                              | 408                               |
| Intra-departmental Tfr         | 103                            | 160                              | 160                               |
| Interest                       | 867                            | 867                              | 867                               |
| Carryover                      | 21                             | 13                               | 13                                |
|                                | 1,487                          | 811                              | 1,456                             |
| <b>Total</b>                   | 11,692                         | 11,511                           | 12,156                            |
| <b>Expense</b>                 |                                |                                  |                                   |
| Director's Office              | 1,181                          | 1,365                            | 1,365                             |
| Consumer Protection            | 2,977                          | 3,216                            | 3,216                             |
| Cooperative Extension          | 978                            | 1,044                            | 1,044                             |
| Pass Tran Reg Division         | 4,245                          | 4,803                            | 4,803                             |
| Cable Access & Other           | 855                            | 1083                             | 1,083                             |
| <b>Total</b>                   | 10,236                         | 11,511                           | 11,511                            |

### EQUITY IN POOLED CASH (FOR PROPRIETARY FUNDS ONLY)

| Fund/<br>Subfund         | Prior FY 04/05<br>Beginning Year<br>Actual | Prior FY 04/05<br>Year-end Actual<br>(Est.) | Current FY 05/06<br>Year-end Budget |
|--------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| 030/032 (PTRD)           | 66   | 718   | 718                                 |
| 030/032 (CPD Regulatory) | 984  | 1136  | 1136                                |
| <b>Total</b>             | 1050                                       | 1854  | 1854                                |

**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook****Department Name: Enterprise Technology Services Department****Fiscal Years: 2005/2006 – 2006/2007****MAJOR FUNDING SOURCES MAJOR VARIANCES IN REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FROM PRIOR YEARS, AND SIGNIFICANT IN-KIND SERVICES**

The Consumer Services Department is funded primarily (76%) from proprietary revenues derived from fees and fines collected from licensed businesses and individuals. These revenues are directed to expenditures that support those regulatory programs.

General fund supported programs include the Cooperative Extension Service, general consumer protection law enforcement, consumer complaint mediation, cable television regulation, cable television access programming, and central administrative support services. Intra-departmental transfers support 64% of the Director's Office/Administration.

CSD receives funds from other departments for specific activities. The Cooperative Extension Service Division receives funds from DERM (\$65k) for activities related to environmental education. Extension also receives funds from DERM and the Solid Waste Department (\$45k) to support the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program that teaches homeowners environmentally sensitive landscaping practices that complement the missions of those agencies. The Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division receives funds from the Seaport (\$50k) for starter services and for-hire enforcement at the Port of Miami.

In FY 05/06 Extension received a grant award pending Board approval in the amount of \$25k from the South Florida Water Management District to complement the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods program.

In FY 05/06 the CSD was awarded \$250k from the Code Enforcement Trust Fund for technology enhancements relating to code enforcement activities.

## **BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**

The Consumer Services Department (CSD) provides countywide services without regard to municipality to a wide range of clientele. The CSD educates and provides assistance to consumers and the business community at large. CSD works closely with the business community in each of the areas it regulates, related industries including the local hospitality and tourism sectors, retail establishments generally, individuals and entities involved in commercial agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture, municipalities, and other County departments.

The CSD monitors state and federal legislation that may impact consumer protection laws or preempt our ability to regulate local businesses. In the 2000 Florida legislature, local government collections of cable television and telecommunications fees were shifted to the State of Florida Department of Revenue with an allocation sent back to the County. In the 2002 session, the legislature adopted a law regulating intrastate movers and limiting local licensing requirements to businesses based in the County. In the 2003, 2004 and 2005 sessions, bills that would regulate towing at the State level died on the calendar; it is expected to be reintroduced in the 2006 session. The towing bill as previously introduced preserved local regulatory authority; however, monitoring is necessary.

In the 2004 state session, SB 2448 was passed related to the regulation, identification and packaging of meat, fish and poultry products severely impacting local consumer protection laws in place since 1968 causing the Department to cease enforcement of these laws. Based upon a favorable review and opinion from the Office of the County Attorney, the Department will reinstate its weight and measures program.

CSD is monitoring other potential legislative initiatives that could impact local laws, including any bills designed to preempt local moving or limousine regulations.

A significant factor that has affected the CSD is a shift from performing general consumer protection activities to performing as a regulatory agency. This shift has occurred over the past 16 years as new regulatory programs have been adopted. In 1998 and 2000, major revisions were made to laws governing taxicabs and limousines, respectively. Resources dedicated to the implementation of these ordinances have been great, resulting in the creation of a training section, new enforcement officers and licensing personnel in the Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division. The Consumer Protection Division has also acquired many business specific regulatory programs, including towing (1988), motor vehicle repair (1992), moving (1994), locksmith (1995), remetering (1996), and motor vehicle title loans and vehicle immobilization (booters) (1999). Towing regulation was preempted temporarily but reinstated in 2003.

General fund supported programs include the Cooperative Extension Service, general consumer protection law enforcement, consumer complaint mediation, cable television regulation, cable television access programming, and central administrative support services. Newer general consumer protection laws that have been enacted have generally not come with funding to support those programs.

## **CUSTOMER FEEDBACK PLAN**

The CSD implemented a customer feedback in FY 04/05 using a variety of measurement tools. CSD's customers include the general business community, CSD regulated industries, and consumers. The Feedback Plan consists of:

- Surveys – provided to businesses, consumers, and industry workgroups to solicit satisfaction with licensing, mediation, and other services.
- Business Inspection Program – regulated businesses contacted to gauge the thoroughness of recent inspections by determining quality of inspection, employee conduct, and educational materials received, if necessary.
- Educational/Seminar Feedback – The Cooperative Extension Division conducts pre and post tests to educational seminar attendees to determine program effectiveness and use of best business practices from knowledge gained; Small Claims Court Clinic attendees are asked to provide information to determine program content and focus areas for future clinics.

Program measurement will be ongoing into FY 06/07 with the results determining program content with the customer's needs as the priority.

## **Critical Success Factors**

- Absence of adverse legislation that results in the preemption or reduction of any of CSD's regulatory programs or general consumer protection laws.
- Additional regulatory programs that are not self-supporting.
- Regulatory fee schedules that fully support regulatory activities.
- Maintaining financial support from DERM and the Solid Waste Department for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program (FYN) and environmental education.
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- Availability of sufficient staff resources and staffing levels.
- Successful completion of the Code required taxicab use study.
- Ongoing support from the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences in support of Extension programs

## **Future Outlook**

Many of the general consumer protection ordinances that are contained in the County Code and enforced by the CSD have been in place for 30 years. CSD plans to review and update these ordinances in the next 18 months.

CSD has been involved in the review and revision of business regulations relating to for-hire transportation. One goal of this process is to convert licensing processes requiring Commission approval to administrative licensing. In addition to revising regulations that govern passenger motor carriers in the current planning cycle, future revisions will include regulations governing non-emergency transportation, special transportation service vehicles, and private school buses.

Maintenance of support for general consumer protection provisions is needed to respond to the needs of consumers and adequately address Board initiatives intended to protect consumers in the marketplace and ensure that all businesses adhere to the same standards.

## THE PLAN

### Overview

Our FY 2005/06 – 2006-07 business plan draws heavily on previously adopted work including the Miami-Dade County Strategic Plan. Miami-Dade County's Strategic Planning initiative is both a plan and a process. The plan provides a framework at a broad Countywide level where we want to go, how we get there, and how we measure our progress along the way. The process ensures increased communications at all levels of County government using consistent terms.

- Our Countywide *Vision of “delivering excellence every day”* communicates the community's shared vision for the best possible future for Miami-Dade County government.
- Our Countywide *Mission* statement communicates the role of our government. Miami-Dade County's mission statement is “*delivering excellent public services that address our community's needs and enhance our quality of life*”.
- Our *Guiding Principles* communicate to all levels of our organization the manner in which we expect all decisions, interactions and activities to be performed.
- Our *Strategic Themes* represent what we consider to be the most significant challenges and opportunities facing Miami-Dade County government.
- We have developed *Goals* across all County Departments. These goals provide the direction the County must move in to address the priority strategic themes and help guide us towards the desired future.
- For each goal we have defined a desired *Outcome* or set of outcomes that the County must achieve to be successful in accomplishing the goal. These outcomes are from the customer/community perspective (e.g. quality of service provided, customer satisfaction).
- For each outcome(s), implementing *Strategies* summarize at a broad countywide level the actions that will be taken to achieve the outcome(s).
- *Key Performance Indicators* are the measures that express the County's intentions from the Strategic Plan. Associated *Key Performance Objectives* assign measurable targets and timelines to the key performance indicators while the *Performance Measure* is the specific unit of measure. Departments may develop *Additional Performance Objectives*.
- *Department Programs/Initiatives (may include activities and tasks)* are actions or groups of actions that will be undertaken by a particular department in a specific fiscal year in order to implement a strategy.

## **Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

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As part of the County's Strategic Plan, the Board of County Commissioners endorsed nine priority strategic themes countywide. This Department is primarily supportive of the following strategic themes:

- Ensure Miami-Dade County operates in a fiscally responsible and stable manner.
- Improve the quality of life for all County residents
- Protect the safety and quality of Miami-Dade County's neighborhoods.
- Continuously improve the performance and capabilities of County operations by maximizing technology, fostering innovation, and increasing access to and information regarding services.
- Promote responsible and comprehensive policy development through effective planning for land use, transportation, and growth management.
- Promote a healthy economy through business development, further economic diversification based on key industries, and by addressing economic disparities in our community.
- Develop and maintain an effective transportation system.
- Protect and preserve our unique environment.
- Promote cooperation and coordination among all government services.

Supporting these themes are supporting goals and priority outcomes that directly relate to this department. These are provided along with the Department's Programs, Initiatives, and Performance Measures for fiscal year 2006.

### **Department-related Strategic Plan Goals:**

- *ES1 Enable County departments and their service partners to deliver quality customer service*
- *ED2 Lead the coordination of economic development activities throughout Miami-Dade County*
- *ED3 Expand entrepreneurial development opportunities within Miami-Dade County*
- *ED4 Create a more business-friendly environment in Miami-Dade County*
- *HH3 Improve the future of Miami-Dade County's children and youth*
- *HH4 Promote independent living through early intervention and support services*
- *NU2 Empower the community by increasing communications and coordination with local, state, and federal entities*
- *NU3 Promote responsible stewardship of natural resources and unique community environments*
- *NU4 Use consistent, fair and effective means to achieve code compliance*
- *NU5 Enact programs to beautify and improve urban and residential areas*

## **Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

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### **Department-related Strategic Plan Priority Outcomes:**

- *ES1-1 Clearly-defined performance expectations and standards*
- *ED2-3 Better informed clients served by various assistance programs*
- *ED3-1 Organizations empowered with the technical and management capacity to succeed*
- *ED4-2 Customer friendly environment for regulated businesses and entities doing business with Miami-Dade County*
- *HH3-3 Young adults with basic education, skills and values*
- *HH4-1 Healthy community*
- *HH4-2 Increased access to full continuum of support services for people with disabilities*
- *NU2-3 Well trained, customer friendly County government workforce*
- *NU3-1 Continuing supplies of quality drinking water to meet demand*
- *NU4-3 Consistent interpretation and application of enforcement practices*
- *NU5-1 Neighborhood and rights-of-way aesthetics that foster and enhance quality of life*